

Appl. No. 10721927
Amdt. Date: Monday, June 13, 2005
Reply to Office action of: March 11, 2005

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended) An apparatus comprising: a handpiece providing, at a distal end thereof, an axial cannula, the handpiece further providing an axial channel for accepting a sleeve of an optical fiber, the axial channel terminating at the axial cannula; the axial cannula of such size as to receive advancement of the optical fiber therewithin, while blocking advancement of the sleeve into the cannula; a hollow compression cap engaged within a proximal end of the axial channel; the compression cap providing a means for gripping the sleeve upon advancement of the compression cap into the channel, so as to selectively prevent axial motion of the sleeve and optical fiber, a distal end of the fiber providing markings at spaced intervals.

Claim 2. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the compression cap is threaded into the channel by converging threads; the gripping means comprising axially oriented fingers, arranged and positioned to close on the sleeve upon advancement of the compression cap into the channel.

Claim 3. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the fingers are unable to fully close ~~enabled for closing only to a diameter that is larger than on a sleeve of a~~ selected commercially available medical optical fiber.

Claim 4. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the cannula is made, at least partially, of a super-elastic memory metal and is axially non-linear.

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Claim 5. (original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the super-elastic memory metal is Nitinol®.

Claim 6. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a compressible tube positioned and restrained at a proximal end of the channel and axially compressible by advancement of the compression cap, thereby providing a gripping force on the sleeve.

Claim 7. An apparatus comprising in combination: a handpiece providing, at a distal end thereof, an axial cannula, the handpiece further providing an axial channel terminating in a shoulder; a sleeve, coaxially fixed about an optical fiber, set axially within the axial channel and terminating at the shoulder; the axial cannula of such size as to receive advancement of the optical fiber therewithin, while the sleeve is blocked from advancement into the cannula by the shoulder; a hollow compression cap engaged within a proximal end of the axial channel; the compression cap providing a means for gripping the sleeve upon advancement of the compression cap into the channel, so as to selectively prevent axial motion of the sleeve and optical fiber, a distal end of the fiber providing markings at spaced intervals.

Claim 8. (original) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the compression cap is threaded into the channel by converging threads; the gripping means comprising axially oriented fingers, such that advancement of the compression cap into the channel closes the fingers onto the sleeve for thereby gripping the sleeve.

Claim 9. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the fingers are ~~enabled~~ unable to fully close for closing only to a diameter that is larger than ~~on~~ the sleeve of a selected commercially available medical optical fiber.

Claim 10. (original) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the cannula is made, at least partially, of a super-elastic memory metal and is non-linear.

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Claim 11. (original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the super-elastic memory metal is Nitinol®.

Claim 12. (original) The apparatus of claim 7 further comprising a compressible tube positioned and restrained at a proximal end of the channel and axially compressible by advancement of the compression cap, thereby providing a gripping force on the sleeve.

Claim 13. (currently amended): A method of selectively preventing axial motion of a sleeve and an optical fiber ~~limiting the reuse of an optical fiber~~ comprising the steps of: providing, at a distal end of an axial channel in a handpiece, an axial cannula; setting a sleeve coaxially about an optical fiber and within the axial channel; forming the sleeve of a size larger than the axial cannula; advancing the optical fiber within the axial cannula; engaging a hollow compression cap within a proximal end of the axial channel; providing a means for gripping the sleeve upon advancement of the compression cap into the channel, ~~so as to selectively prevent axial motion of the sleeve and optical fiber;~~ threading the compression cap into the channel through converging threads; and tightening axially oriented fingers during advancement of the compression cap into the channel to thereby close the fingers onto the sleeve for gripping thereof.

Claim 14. (cancelled)

Claim 15. (original): The method of claim 13 further comprising positioning a compressible tube restrained at a proximal end of the channel, and advancing the compression cap axially thereby compressing the tube to produce a gripping force on the sleeve.

Claim 16. (currently amended): A method of selectively preventing axial motion of a sleeve and optical fiber ~~limiting the reuse of an optical fiber~~ comprising the steps of:

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providing a handpiece having, at a distal end thereof, an axial cannula, the handpiece further providing an axial channel terminating in a shoulder; placing a sleeve, coaxially fixed about an optical fiber, axially within the axial channel and terminating the sleeve at the shoulder; advancing the optical fiber within the axial cannula while blocking advancement of the sleeve by the shoulder; engaging a hollow compression cap within a proximal end of the axial channel; and providing the compression cap with a means for gripping the sleeve upon advancement of the compression cap into the channel, so as to selectively prevent axial motion of the sleeve and optical fiber.

Claim 17 (new): The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a marking on the sleeve at a position such that the marking is adjacent to the axial channel of the handpiece when the sleeve cannot be further advanced into the axial channel.

Claim 18 (new): The apparatus of claim 7 further comprising a marking on the sleeve at a position such that the marking is adjacent to the axial channel of the handpiece when the sleeve cannot be further advanced into the axial channel.